

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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NATIONAL AQUARIUM TO DISPLAY JAPANESE GIFT TO PRESIDENT NIXON

Eight rare Nishiki-Koi (fancy carp), a gift from former Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi to President Nixon, will go on display April 9 at the National Aquarium, the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. National Aquarium officials describe the fish as probably the most beautiful ever exhibited in the U.S.

In a ceremony as part of Washington's Cherry Blossom Festival, Yosaku Hirasawa, noted Koi breeder, will present the extraordinary fish at 11 a.m. that date. Ambassador Marion H. Smoak, the State Department's acting chief of Protocol, will accept the Koi on behalf of President Nixon.

Also present will be Ambassador Nobuhiko Ushiba of Japan, Cherry Blossom princesses, and Interior Department and District Government officials.

Japan sent a stonemason from Tokyo to Washington, D.C., to do the stonework on a special garden pool, complete with waterfall, which the Aquarium had built to house the fish. The Koi will become a permanent display of the National Aquarium.

Koi, famed for their variety, longevity, beauty, and hardiness, have been bred in Japan for centuries to bring out special colors and patterns. The normally dull-brown common carp, which are found in the Potomac River, have been transformed into "living jewels," a term that many persons use to describe the Koi.

In Japanese culture, these fish symbolize strength, courage, and will power. Legends associated with the carp tell of its energy in moving up swift streams and waterfalls. Because of its determination, Koi are held to be fitting examples for young Japanese children--typifying perseverance, strength and ambition. May 5 is Children's Day (Kodomo No Hi) in Japan, when large flags decorated with paintings of carp traditionally are flown outside the homes of children.

Koi, first developed in Japan, are bred with great dedication in that country. Koi also are bred in the U.S., mostly in Hawaii and on the West Coast.

The tough, rugged carp are among the longest living fish--one is known to have lived 222 years. Specimens at the National Aquarium range from 10 to 60 years old.

The National Aquarium is located in the lower lobby of the Commerce Department Building, 14th and Constitution Avenue. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week.

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